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SUBJECT: VERDICT IN FRANKFURT TERRORISM TRIAL - WHAT WE
LEARNED ABOUT THE FRANKFURT CELL'S METHODS AND CONTACTS

REF: A. 2002 FRANKFURT 3580 (NOTAL); B. 2002 FRANKFURT 5829;
[1](#)C. 2002 FRANKFURT 6207; D. 2002 FRANKFURT 10187

[1](#)1. (U) Background and summary: This cable is a wrap up of the Frankfurt terrorism trial. It is based on observations by U.S. officials at the trial, but is not to be taken as a verbatim transcript of the proceedings. When the written verdict is published, post will provide it to Department.

[1](#)2. (U) Summary continued: Four Algerians and one Moroccan, part of a group commonly referred to as the "Frankfurt cell" or the "Meliani Group", were arrested in December 2000. Bomb-making materials and weapons were found in their Frankfurt apartments. On March 10, 2003, four of the five defendants were sentenced to 10-12 years of prison (the possible maximum being 15) for plotting to bomb the Christmas market in Strasbourg, France. One defendant, Busid Karimou, had his case severed from the rest of the group. He was charged with membership in a terrorist group and was released from detention on August 30, 2002. All the defendants trained in camps in Afghanistan. The trial provided insight into the activities of a group of terrorists, who trained in Afghanistan, and operated in western Europe against a European target. This cable compiles what was learned during the trial about the backgrounds of the terrorists and suspected terrorists, their movements and operations, and their connections to other terrorists in Europe. End background and summary.

Defendants Trained in Afghanistan, But Court Could Not Prove
Al Qaeda Connection

[1](#)3. (U) The group was arrested in December 2000 and their trial began in Frankfurt on April 2002, at the Higher State Court (Oberlandesgericht), convened by the Special Panel for State Security Cases (Staatsschutzsenat). Four of the five defendants, Aerubi Beandali, Lamine Maroni, Fuhad Sabour and Salim Boukhari, were charged with forming a terrorist organization, planning an explosion, plotting to commit murder, falsifying documents, and possession of weapons. They were sentenced to 10-12 years in prison and have only a week to appeal, although their basis for appeals under German law is limited to procedural irregularities. The theoretical maximum sentence was 15 years. A formal written verdict is expected before the end of March.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Defendants Beandali, Boukhari and Karimou admitted to training in terrorist camps in Afghanistan (Jalalabad, Khost and Khaldan). Boukhari also mentioned learning electronics in Turkum, which he described as a "Kurdish camp" (presumably in Turkum, Pakistan). Sabour said he had a year's training in "Islamic studies" in Afghanistan (presumably also at a terrorist camp) where he met Beandali and Boukhari. A witness, Hassan Aknoush, said that Maroni also trained with terrorists in Afghanistan. The court never successfully determined who planned or ordered the attack, although Chief Judge Zeiher said it probably originated with a man called Abu Doha in London. Due to the complications of getting witnesses from other countries, the prosecution dropped the charge of "membership in a terrorist organization" on January 15, 2003. The prosecution determined that proving the defendants were linked with known terrorist organizations would have dragged out the trial (it had already lasted nearly a year) without increasing the severity of the ultimate sentences. There were some indications the group was affiliated with the Algerian GSPC or Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, and their Afghanistan training suggests an Al Qaeda connection, but the court was unable to verify these

connections.

The Defendants: Multiple Aliases

15. (SBU) The following are the known names/aliases and dates of birth of the defendants. (Some variances in spelling have been seen in different sources.)

1A. Aeurobui Beandali (also Deandali) DOB 12/10/1975; aka Ben Ali; aka Mustapha Mestpha Kelouili DOB 11/19/1978; aka Djilali Benali Correia DOB 7/15/1975; aka Djilali Adadi DOB 6/5/1975. Presumed Algerian.

1B. Lamine Moroni, DOB 1/10/1970; aka Benard Pascale, DOB 7/25/1970. Presumed Algerian.

1C. Salim Boukhari (also Boukari), DOB 8/8/1971; aka Hicham El-Haddad, DOB 4/30 1980; aka Claude Aman, DOB 8/8/1971; aka Karim Muscat DOB 8/8/1971; aka Messaoud (also Mesud) Zamali (also Zemani) DOB 8/4/1966; aka Mihdi; aka Malsara; aka Kamal. Presumed Algerian.

1D. Fouhad Sabour, DOB 2/13/1965; aka Hassene Benaimine DOB 12/08/1967; aka Samir Bouinoual DOB 8/9/1978; aka Alain Dubois; aka Morira. French or Algerian.

1E. Samir Karimou (also Krimou) aka Ibrahim Ahmed, DOB 12/18/1968; aka Abdel Kader. (Released from prison August 30, 2002, continued attending trial.) Born in Rabat, Morocco.

The Evidence: Bomb-Making Materials, Weapons, Forged Passports, Videotape of Strasbourg Christmas Market

16. (SBU) The evidence presented in the case included a surveillance videotape of the Strasbourg Christmas market and surrounding area, the weapons and the bomb-making materials found in the apartments, and police recordings of defendants' phone conversations. Two apartments and a rental car were searched by the Bundeskriminalamt or BKA (similar to the FBI). An apartment in Roederbergweg was searched on December 23 and 26, 2000. Another apartment on Sigmund Freud Strasse was searched on December 25-26, 2000. Items found included various passports and identification papers (some of them fraudulent); weapons, including two mini-machine pistols; 2 semi-automatic weapons; a revolver and ammunition; a hand grenade; 20 kg of potassium permanganate; various electrical components and wires; chemicals and a detonator; batteries; acetone peroxide (TATP); mobile phones; cannabis or hashish; nails; and cash in various currencies (German marks, British pounds, French francs.) (Note: the cannabis or hashish was apparently seen on the initial search on December 23, 2000, but were missing when the items were seized on December 26.) Various notes and letters were also found. Forged passports were also found in one of the defendant's rental cars. Defendant Beandali stated the weapons were eventually to be shipped to Algeria.

The Defendants, Background, Statements, Observations

Defendant, Aeurobui Beandali: The Bomb Builder

17. (SBU) Aeurobui Beandali was the first of the defendants to testify before the court. Beandali expressed regret for his actions, stating that the events of September 11 had changed his views on terrorism as a means of political change. Of the five defendants, Beandali seems to have been in Germany the longest but had the strongest connection to Algeria. He said his original motivation was anger over human rights abuses committed by the Algerian military government. Beandali said he has been a member of the Islamic Salvation Front political party (outlawed in 1992). Beandali fled Algeria in 1992 at the age of 16 and applied for political asylum in Germany. After committing several criminal offences, including theft and aggravated assault, Beandali's German asylum application was rejected and he was ordered deported in April 1992. He went into hiding to avoid deportation, supporting himself by petty crime and drug trafficking. He also spent some time in France, although the dates are unclear, where he apparently also committed robbery and drug-related crimes.

18. (SBU) Beandali gave contradictory statements about his whereabouts in 1999-2000. In one statement he said from March 1999 until spring 2000 he lived in an apartment on Leonardsgasse 7 in Frankfurt. In another, he claimed he went to Afghanistan from about November 1999 - August 2000. Beandali said he paid his own way to train in a camp in Afghanistan, spending about \$15,000 of his own money.

Beandali claimed he had to pay for his own ammunition - \$150 for 750 rounds of ammunition. He described his training in Afghanistan as specializing in religion, light weapons, heavy weapons and explosives. Beandali said he met another defendant, Karimou, at a camp near the Afghan town of Khaldan, although Karimou stated he met Beandali in Khost.

9. (SBU) Beandali said he was an expert in explosives and that it was his job to buy the bomb-building materials for the Frankfurt cell. He explained that the bomb was to be placed in a large, aluminum, Pakistani steam pot, which he ordered in London. (Note: The fact that this would have produced deadly splinter fragments was used as evidence that the targets were people and not an empty synagogue as the other defendants claimed. End Note.) He also bought large amounts of potassium permanganate. Found among the evidence seized in the Frankfurt apartment was a letter, purportedly from a company, attempting to place an order for 115 kilograms of potassium permanganate. Beandali admitted that he and Boukhari had written the letter using a fabricated company name and person (Barakhat). Given the large amount of potassium permanganate, the prosecutors asked if the group planned multiple attacks. Beandali stated that several attacks in Algeria were planned after Strasbourg, hence the large amount of bomb materials.

10. (SBU) The BKA testified on what was found in Beandali's rental car, which was in very bad shape. Found inside were a backpack, several false passports, various papers and passport photos. One of the passports was connected with Aknoush and Aknoush's fingerprints were found on the backpack. (Note: Aknoush, an associate of the Frankfurt cell, is in custody in France.) They also found a mobile phone, whose number matched with one being monitored by the BKA.

11. (SBU) Despite Beandali's sometimes contradictory statements and previous criminal record, he was actually the most open with the court, helped moved the proceedings along, and expressed regret for his actions and a desire to turn away from Islamic extremism. He received the lightest sentence, ten years, due to his cooperation with the court. Beandali accepted the sentence and said he would not appeal.

Defendant, Lamine Maroni: The Disruptive, Absurd One

12. (SBU) Beandali had stated that Lamine Maroni's only job was to help him mix the chemicals to make explosives and that he was not involved in planning the attack. Maroni did not formally testify but confirmed some statements by defendant Sabour. Maroni said Beandali was the leader of the Frankfurt cell and he openly displayed hostility to Beandali. Maroni's role in the group was unclear, but the other defendants seemed to be a bit afraid of him. Maroni seems to have been in England before coming to Frankfurt with Boukhari sometime in late 2000. Maroni did not cooperate with his lawyers, then complained he was uninformed. A witness, Hassan Aknoush, has stated that Maroni also trained with terrorists in Afghanistan.

13. (SBU) Maroni was disruptive from the start. On the first day of the trial he shouted, "Everyone here is a Jew!" He said that non-believers are dirt, that he did not want a lawyer, and that he only had contact with God. He continued to disrupt proceedings on subsequent trial days and was absent for the fourth trial session on May 7, 2002, after being found in prison with a razor blade which he used to cut up his clothing. He later rejoined the trial, having missed several sessions. Maroni enjoyed engaging in distracting behavior, especially when it seemed sensitive information was about to be revealed by a defendant or witness. He yelled out things to the other defendants such as, "Sometimes they lie to you to get you talking." He demanded sandwiches, chocolate, made absurd statements, criticized the judges and prosecuting attorneys, and complained loudly about his handcuffs.

14. (SBU) Maroni received a sentence of eleven years, one year higher than the prosecution had requested, for his lack of cooperation and repeated hostile statements. His outbursts demonstrated his hatred and ruthlessness, the court concluded.

Defendant Salim Boukhari: The London Connection

15. (SBU) The defendant Salim Boukhari appears to have had the strongest connections to London. The Algerian Embassy questioned him on October 30, 2002 with his lawyers present. The Algerian Embassy confirmed that Boukhari was Algerian, but cast doubt on the accuracy of the name and Algerian address he had given. When Judge Zeiher read Boukhari's Algerian address from a letter Boukhari had written (50

Boulevard Mohammed V, Algiers, 1016 Algeria), Boukhari declined to confirm it, but asked the judge not to reveal it to the Algerian Embassy, apparently afraid the Algerian government might harm his family. The judge responded that the address was not a secret.

116. (SBU) According to his own statement, Boukhari wanted to study in France but failed to get a residence permit. He went to London but was deported, though the dates are unclear. Somehow he returned, and according to his own statements, lived in London starting from about 1995. He married Tina Nash and lived with her at 79 Blesbury Road in London. He worked for a security company called Mitas Security and then later moved to the Layton Stone district. He met a man named Nouredine in 1995, who got him interested in religion. After Boukhari's divorce in 1998, he moved in with Nouredine, who recruited him for Islamic causes, showing him videos of Algeria, Chechnya and Palestine. Boukhari said he thought of donating money to the Algerian freedom struggle but instead used his life savings of 3000 British pounds to go to Afghanistan via Pakistan.

117. (SBU) He arrived in Peshawar in early 2000. He was welcomed by Hassan Aknoush and other Algerians, including a man named Jaffa. Boukhari trained for five months in Afghanistan in light and heavy weapons, electronics and religion. He became ill with malaria and typhoid fever and returned to Pakistan where he stayed with Jaffa. In Pakistan, Boukhari got to know Beandali. When Jaffa was forced to flee, pursued by Pakistani intelligence services, Boukhari obtained a forged British passport and returned to London on September 16, 2000. He remarried in October 2000 and had a son on June 19, 2001. He met Nouredine again, who asked him if he was willing to go to Frankfurt to pick up some weapons from Aknoush. Boukhari went to Frankfurt in early November 2000 for a few days. Later in November 2000, he returned to Frankfurt, accompanied by Maroni, and stayed with Beandali.

118. (SBU) Boukhari's statements to the court were often confusing and inconsistent. Regarding his involvement in the attack in Strasbourg, Boukhari said that the planning began in early December 2000, and claimed he agreed to participate if no one would be hurt. He also claimed he intended to return to London in December 2000, and therefore would not be present at the time of the attack. Boukhari admits he was the point of contact for Nourredine in London. Boukhari claims, however, that Nourredine did not give orders or designate a target but gave "only ideas." Boukhari admitted buying chemicals at different locations in Germany with the help of Sabour. Boukhari also admitted making the comment on the surveillance videotape of the Strasbourg Christmas market, "These are the enemies of God. They dance and are happy, God willing they will stew in hell."

119. (SBU) Aknoush stated that Boukhari was in contact with Abu Doha in London. Boukhari said he had spoken with Abu Doha but only on the subject of renting rooms in Baden Baden. Aknoush, in a statement from detention in France, also said that Boukhari was the assigned leader of the Frankfurt cell. Boukhari stated that the attack was planned for the end of January or beginning of February 2001, perhaps, again to distract from the Christmas market as target and the charge of attempted murder.

120. (SBU) Boukhari received the longest sentence of the four defendants, twelve years in prison. Judge Zeiher concluded he was the "driving force" behind the Frankfurt cell who obtained money for the operation, purchased the largest amount of bomb-making materials, and handled logistics. He cooperated only reluctantly with the court, and frequently expressed hatred of Jews and western culture.

Defendant, Fouhad Sabour

121. (SBU) Fouhad Sabour said that he became involved with Islamic extremists in London in 1995. In 1996, he was arrested in France for membership in a terrorist organization. He admitted being a member of Algeria's GIA or Armed Islamic Front. He said that he spent a year in Afghanistan (May 1999 - May 2000) for "Islamic legal studies." (Note: Presumably, Sabour was also at a terrorist training camp, though he did not specify where.) There he met Beandali and Boukhari. It is not clear when Sabour came to Germany, but he said he met and moved in with Maroni in the Sigmund Freud Strasse apartment in Frankfurt. Sabour admitted possessing three fraudulent passports and other forged documents and using aliases.

122. (SBU) Sabour's role in the plot was unclear. Boukhari, in his statements, denied that Sabour had any detailed knowledge of the bombing plans. It seems Sabour was

assigned some duties (specifics unclear) to help in carrying out the attack together with Boukhari or Beandali. Boukhari said he and Sabour bought chemicals at different locations in Germany. Sabour also admitted driving the car to Strasbourg, accompanying Boukhari to videotape the target.

123. (SBU) Sabour received the second highest sentence of eleven and a half years. The judges agreed with the prosecution that Sabour's participation in videotaping the Christmas market made him a willing accomplice in the attack.

Defendant, Busid Karimou

123. (SBU) Busid Karimou was released from detention on August 30, 2002. The court could not find any evidence he was involved in the preparations for the bomb attack, thus he was only charged with membership in a criminal group, which carries a one-to-ten year sentence. The judge ordered Karimou released from custody after he was incarcerated for 17 months, noting that continued detention was unreasonable, considering that a prisoner can be eligible for an early release, based on good behavior, after having served two thirds of the sentence. The judge noted that Karimou had lied repeatedly, given a false name, and at first denied that he had trained in Afghanistan, and thus was not innocent.

125. (SBU) According to his own statement, Karimou was born in Rabat, Morocco. He moved to Algeria, then to Germany in February 1999. He applied for asylum in Germany on February 23, 1999 and fell in with hashish dealers while the decision was pending. He felt he was being pursued by police and fled to London, where he hoped to get a job and a residence permit. He began visiting the Finsbury Park mosque in London and became interested in religion and politics. In January 2000, he joined a Tunisian friend named Amar and went to Afghanistan for training. First he stayed with Jaffa in Peshawar, then went to a camp in Jalalabad. There he met Boukhari, who had just ended his training. He was required to turn in his forged French passport. He met Beandali at a second camp in Khost. The training was harder than he expected; Karimou said he argued constantly with his group leader and the other participants. After only three months of training, he returned to Pakistan, where Jaffa accused him of being a traitor. Karimou said he got his forged French passport back only after repeated attempts.

126. (SBU) Karimou returned to London in May 2000 and met an old friend from Frankfurt, Abdel Hadid. Unable to find a job in London, Karimou moved to Frankfurt in July 2000. At first he had no place to stay, but then managed to throw Aknouch out of his apartment in Sporstrasse 61. (The landlord was angry because Aknouch had not paid his rent.) Apparently this apartment was used as a meeting point for the group, and Beandali and Boukhari were frequent visitors. Karimou said he had no knowledge of the Strasbourg attack and was never a member of the group. Beandali, in his statement, also said Karimou was innocent and not involved in the plot but only arrested because they were friends. According to Beandali, Karimou was merely in the wrong place at the wrong time when arrests were made.

Witnesses, Contacts and Others Connected to the Frankfurt Cell

127. (SBU) Mohammed Afane, witness. Born in Algeria, age 26, arrived in Frankfurt in April 2000 after transiting Spain and France. Afane said he had met Karimou in Frankfurt, and knew Karimou's brothers in Algeria. Afane also testified that he met Boukhari (known to him as Hitscham) in Weiterstadt prison near Darmstadt. Boukhari asked Afane to take a letter for him, which Afane declined to do after reading it. He said the letter mentioned "saving money for weapons to support our friends" and a man named Suleiman who was not arrested and "hopefully could make it before he also gets arrested." Afane assumed Suleiman was a dangerous terrorist. (Note: Suleiman may be Slimane Khalfoui or Slimane Mutamna, see below.)

128. (SBU) Hassan Aknouch (aka Jassin; aka Moheme; aka Aknouche), witness. In detention in France. He apparently met Boukhari in Pakistan. Aknouch's written statements were read by the Frankfurt court. A backpack with Aknouch's fingerprints was found in Beandali's rental car. Beandali has stated that the weapons seized in the Frankfurt apartment belonged to Aknouch, although Beandali denied Aknouch was connected to the bomb plot. Beandali said he had known Aknouch since 1999. Aknouch said, in statements to French authorities cited by the court in Frankfurt, that Abu Doha was the head of the Frankfurt cell and Boukhari was his closest contact. Aknouch said that according to a phone call he had with Abu Doha, Abu Doha "picked Boukhari to be

in charge of the attack in Strasbourg." Aknouch stated, as reported in French police documents, that Boukhari and Maroni underwent training with Abu Kahba, an expert in bombs and chemical weapons connected to Al Qaeda, in Afghanistan.

129. (SBU) Abu Doha (aka Dr. Rashid), contact. Suspected Algerian terrorist leader, in custody in England awaiting extradition to the United States based on his connection with the plot to bomb Los Angeles International Airport during the Millennium. He has been described by the media as the man who supervised Algerian terrorists in Europe once they had finished their training in Afghanistan. Abu Doha was a contact of Boukhari's in London. His role in the planned Strasbourg attack is unclear. Defendant Beandali has denied Abu Doha was the leader of the Frankfurt cell. Defendant Boukhari has admitted to telephone conversations with Abu Doha, but said he has never met him. Boukhari stated that Abu Doha had instructed the Frankfurt cell, presumably in December 2000, to rent another apartment "for a longer time," but Boukhari said that Abu Doha had nothing to do with the Strasbourg attack and was not the leader of the Frankfurt cell. However, according to the BKA, British intelligence reported a telephone conversation between Boukhari (in Frankfurt) and Abu Doha (in London) on December 24, 2000 in which the attack was discussed and Boukhari asks Abu Doha for more money for the rooms rented in Frankfurt.

130. (SBU) Mohammed Sadikki (aka Mohammed Bitchu), witness. Got to know Maroni and Beandali in two German prisons. Sadikki provided the most extensive testimony of any witness. According to Sadikki, Maroni admitted to participation in a number of terrorist operations in the U.K. Sadikki said Beandali asked him to deliver a message to a mosque in Frankfurt and talked of the need to fight Christians and Jews. Beandali mentioned a synagogue in Lille, France as a potential target. Beandali also told Sadikki the group planned further attacks in Germany, France and Spain. Beandali never mentioned the Strasbourg Christmas market to Sadikki, but Beandali said he would like to turn Rome, the cradle of Christianity, into ashes. Sadikki verified Beandali's role as bomb expert and indicated that Beandali and other members of the group coordinated their testimonies in prison before the trial started.

131. (SBU) Sadikki mentioned Usama bin Laden twice. Sadikki reported that Beandali asked him to contact a man named Abdul Rachman in London after his release. Beandali described Rachman as "Usama bin Laden's representative" in London, who had also promised to take hostages to force the release of the members of the Frankfurt cell. Sadikki also testified that Beandali told him that the camp in Afghanistan at which he was trained was run by Usama bin Laden. Sadikki also said that the group used forged documents and stolen credit cards. Sadikki's testimony was sharply challenged by Beandali's attorney. Sadikki also did not always strike observers as a credible witness since much of his testimony consisted of merely confirming statements he had given earlier to the police. He also seemed to be exaggerating at times. For example, at one point, he said the Frankfurt cell had 38 million German marks at their disposal, which caused the defendants to laugh.

132. (SBU) Slimane Khalfaoui, (aka Azzedine; aka Slimane Amena; aka Sedine; aka "Tourist"), contact. Was arrested in an eastern suburb of Paris, France on November 25, 2002 in connection with the Strasbourg bombing plot. Slimane Khalfaoui is described by a New York Times report as "an important member of the Al Qaeda network in Europe," a 27-year-old with French-Algerian nationality, who fought in Bosnia and Afghanistan and has been on wanted lists since 1996. Beandali admitted knowing Slimane Khalfaoui. The police have a recording of a phone conversation between Slimane Khalfaoui and Beandali from December 25, 2000. They discussed the whereabouts of Noureddine and Slimane Khalfaoui's expected arrival in Frankfurt. Slimane Khalfaoui may have lived in Lyon for a time, providing the Frankfurt cell with information on Jewish communities. Beandali stated that Slimane Khalfaoui "sometimes resided in Germany, but also in France and Britain."

133. (SBU) Abdul Rachman, alleged contact. Described by the witness Sadikki (see above) as "Usama bin Laden's representative" in London, who had also promised to take hostages to force the release of the members of the Frankfurt cell. Sadikki, in his testimony, stated that defendant Beandali had asked Sadikki to contact a man named Abdul Rachman in London after Sadikki's release.

134. (SBU) Meliani, aka Mohamed Bensakhria, alleged contact. Currently in French custody. According to an Italian police report filed with a court in Milan, the Frankfurt cell is connected to Mohamed Bensakhria in Italy. Meliani has also been described as a leader of the Frankfurt cell and the BKA has investigated other Meliani contacts in Berlin. The Frankfurt cell's connection to Meliani was never pursued by

the Frankfurt court.

135. (SBU) Lazahr ben Mohamad Tlilli, alleged contact. A 33-year old Tunisian man was arrested in Marseille in mid-October 2000. According to the media, Lazahr ben Mohamad Tlilli was in possession of false documents and telephone numbers of people suspected of terrorist involvement in Italy, Germany, Belgium, England and France. Lazahr ben Mohamad Tlilli is alleged to have connections with at least one member of the Frankfurt cell. The Frankfurt court did not pursue this connection.

136. (SBU) Mounir Shuhaib, contact. Another suspected terrorist and alias of the person who rented the apartment in Sigmund Freud Strasse according to BKA testimony.

137. (SBU) Hassan Atap, contact. According to Beandali, he is an opposition leader in Algeria and was his contact for planning attacks in Algeria.

138. (SBU) Jaffa, contact. For a time based in Peshawar, described by Boukhari as a member of the Takfiri group, more extremist than the Taliban. Karimou also mentioned Jaffa in Peshawar. Karimou said Jaffa accused him of being a traitor when Karimou gave up after only three months of training in Afghanistan. Jaffa was reluctant to return to Karimou his forged French passport. (Note: Perhaps this is the Abu Jaffar mentioned by Ahmed Ressay, the millennium bomber in his 2001 testimony, as "in charge of the Algerian cells" training in Afghanistan. Abu Jaffar was also described by Ressay as being a camp leader, and training recruits in the use of TNT and C4 explosives.)

139. (SBU) Djoumakh, alleged contact. In detention in France, presumed Algerian. Mentioned in the November 23, 2002 trial session by Judge Zeiher as a friend of Slimane Mutamna. Prosecutor Brinkmann said that Djoumakh had testified on contacts Maroni, Boukhari and Sabour had with Abu Doha and Slimane Mutamna in London.

140. (SBU) Salime (also Slimane) Mutamna, contact. Boukhari said he, Salime Mutamna and Sabour were all together in Frankfurt in November 2000, where they attempted to purchase weapons for Algeria.

Motivation, Connection to Al Qaeda?

141. (SBU) The defendants gave various and contradictory explanations of their motivation for a terrorist attack. Beandali, the most active in Algerian causes, claimed anger at human rights abuses in Algeria or "fighting the dangerous regime" in Algeria a motivation. Beandali stated the weapons seized by authorities were intended for Algeria. Boukhari and Sabour also cited solidarity with the "struggle of the Palestinian people" as a reason. A desire to disrupt relations between France and Israel was also mentioned. All defendants seem to share a general hatred of Jews and Christians as shown in statements such as, "Non-believers don't deserve to breathe. They are the enemies of God...." The court did not establish any clear motivation for the attack by the Frankfurt cell -- or any of its members -- or why Strasbourg in particular was selected as a target, though clearly the Strasbourg cathedral and market are heavily symbolic. The defendants have given contradictory statements about whose idea the attack was. Sabour stated it was the idea of the Frankfurt cell alone, while Beandali said that Boukhari received orders for the attack from London. Defendants are vigorous in denying any connection to Al Qaeda, though their training in Afghanistan camps and contact with other known Al Qaeda network members make this claim somewhat doubtful. The court abandoned attempts to prove an Al Qaeda connection by dropping membership in a terrorist organization charges in January, 2003.

What was the London Connection? What was the role of Abu Doha and Nouredine?

142. (SBU) Abu Doha: The London connection to the Frankfurt cell is unclear. According to the BKA, British intelligence reported a phone call between Boukhari (in Frankfurt) and Abu Doha (in London) on December 24, 2000, in which a terrorist attack is discussed and Boukhari asks Abu Doha for more German money to pay for two rooms rented in Frankfurt. Boukhari admitted to having phone conversations with Abu Doha, but denied Abu Doha was the leader of the group. The criminal complaint filed in the Southern District of New York alleges that Abu Doha facilitated the travel of trainees into Al-Qaeda-affiliated training camps and was responsible for establishing communication among various cells in the training camps (see par. 8). In addition, in press statements, the prosecutors described Abu Doha as a key figure in Al Qaeda.

143. (SBU) Nouredine (never further identified), Beandali's View: Nouredine was another London contact frequently mentioned. Beandali said he distrusted Nouredine. He said he met him in Afghanistan and noted he did not follow Islamic washing rites. He described Nouredine as an Algerian with a French passport living in London. He stated that Nouredine was an undercover agent of French intelligence and that Nouredine had told Beandali that the French secret service had offered him money to inform on Algerians living in London and Afghanistan. Beandali also heard from a man known as "the Emir" that Nouredine was an informer. Beandali also said that Nouredine was flown out of the Balkans by the French government. Nouredine was also interested in a man named Hisham, whom Beandali claimed was wanted by the FBI. Beandali said he helped Hisham escape from Afghanistan to London, then to Germany and Spain. Eventually, Hisham was arrested in Algeria and Beandali believes Nouredine turned Hisham into the authorities. Thus for several reasons, Beandali felt Nouredine was an informer. In a somewhat contradictory statement, however, Beandali suspected Nouredine of directing the attack in Strasbourg (Comment: This seems strange for a French intelligence agent. End comment) and giving orders to Boukhari from London. Beandali told Judge Zeiher, when he "heard Nouredine in London was behind the plan," he "found it unlikely that the target was an empty building. A guy like Nouredine certainly had something more spectacular in mind, something where people could be hurt."

144. (SBU) Nouredine, Boukhari's View: In contrast, Boukhari appears to have been a rather close friend of Nouredine. Boukhari stayed with Nouredine at his London apartment at various times and between his marriages. Nouredine apparently nudged Boukhari in the direction of Islamic extremism, inspiring him to train in Afghanistan. Boukhari also said that the Frankfurt cell had 20,000 German marks at their disposal, which Nouredine had brought from London. Boukhari has been vague about Nouredine's role in the Strasbourg attack, but has stated that Nouredine only gave "ideas, not orders."

CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENT

145. (SBU) The defendants, all of Algerian or Moroccan origin, spent time in western Europe (especially France, England and Germany), and were involved in terrorist and/or criminal activity for several years. They moved easily in and out of Germany and around western Europe. Four of the five (all but Maroni) have admitted to training in Afghanistan. Three of the five (Beandali, Boukhari, Karimou) admitted to training in terrorist camps there. A witness, Hassan Aknoush, has stated that Maroni also trained with terrorists in Afghanistan. Thus if Aknoush is correct, all five defendants trained in Afghanistan. The Frankfurt cell was planning some type of bomb attack in Strasbourg and had gathered significant bomb-making materials for the job. The Frankfurt cell had definite connections to others assumed to be terrorists or Islamic extremists in England and France. Although the court could not prove an Al Qaeda connection, defendants admitted contact with Slimane Khalfaoui (in France, alleged member of Al Qaeda network), Abu Doha (in London, alleged member of Al Qaeda network); and Nouredine (in London, affiliation unknown.) In reading the sentences, Judge Zeiher said that the arrest of the defendants had "prevented a bloodbath."

146. (U) This message has been coordinated with Embassy Berlin.

BODDE